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Narrative in Advertising: The Effects of Brand Character on Consumer Perception

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RUNNING HEAD: NARRATIVE IN ADVERTISING

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Introduction

Kotler's (2000) textbook definition deems advertising "any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor" (p. 578). This traditional definition gives an accurate depiction of the activities involved in advertising; however, the distinction that advertising is "non-personal" is changing (Winer, 2007). Technology (especially the Internet) has provided firms more opportunities to interact with customers (Voyer, 2007). The rapid dissemination of digital technology in the 20th century has also changed the way society thinks and understands information (Prensky, 2001). These technological changes have affected interpersonal, professional, and commercial communication, and the methods and expectations that accompany each.

Nowhere is this shift more relevant than in the realm of advertising. Today's advertisers must understand how individuals consume information and entertainment, both in terms of media (physical or virtual) and platform (online, app, social media, or traditional formats). Although researchers have been paying close attention to the technology landscape, they have not yet exhaustively explored another sociocultural trend introduced by technology—a growing need for personalization of consumer experience and powerful brand narratives. Buyers want individual experiences that reflect personal needs, attitudes, and situations. The need for inclusive individuality is the need to be respected as an individual but also have a feeling of belonging to a bigger picture (Light, 2014). Advertisers who have grown accustomed to focusing on what's inside the package now face pressure to differentiate their brands by connecting with target markets on a deeper and more emotional basis.

While there are limited findings on the use of narrative plot in advertisements (Green & Brock, 2000; Stern & Gallagher, 1990), researchers have increasingly demonstrated that campaigns able to effectively tell the story of their brand are more likely to create positive brand association (Martin et. al. 2003; Ritchie 2010). Further research has demonstrated that powerful cultural stories, or myths, have strong potential to inspire feelings of personal connection and empowerment in relation to a brand (Sachs, 2012; Kessous, 2015; Brown et. al., 2013). Sachs suggests that when an advertisement follows the structure of a myth, the brand is cast as a character. Sachs theorizes that whether the brand plays the mythological role of hero or instead the mythological role of mentor in an ad can make a significant difference in consumer brand perception. In a Brand-as-Hero ad, once a problem is established, the brand's product or service rescues the main character of the ad from imminent danger. Alternatively, in a Brand-as-Mentor ad, once a problem is established, the main character of the ad experiences an epiphany, and the brand's product or service has a supportive presence (Sachs, 2012).

The present study was designed to subject traditional television advertisements to more traditional literary analysis and ascertain whether there is a statistically meaningful relationship between television advertisements that employ the Brand-as-Mentor storyline and an increase in the positive perception of the brand advertised. It also seeks to shed light on differences in consumer attitude depending upon the presence of Brand-as-Mentor or Brand-as-Hero advertisements within different product categories.

The Hierarchy Models of Advertising

As advertisers experience increasingly personal and frequent interactions with customers, it would be beneficial to take a closer look at typical models of effective communication in the

advertising world. There are three traditionally accepted models for consumer response to advertising efforts. These are the AIDA model, the hierarchy of effects model, and the innovation-adoption model. Each of these models assesses consumer response using a combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioral steps. For example, in the AIDA model, the ad must gain the consumer's attention, spark interest and desire, and initiate a purchase or product trial action. These three models differ in the amount of steps between exposure to an advertisement and consumer action, but all of them maintain that the cognitive steps are sequential and cumulative, so a consumer cannot move to the next stage without having experienced the stage that directly precedes it (Voyer, 2007; Everett, 1995).

Although these models have been historically useful, some of their underlying assumptions are the subject of debate (Voyer, 2007). Some researchers have noted that affect and cognition are independent of one another, and therefore cognition does not necessarily have to precede affective response (Zajonc, 1980). Furthermore, these models do not take into account the consumer's level of involvement (high or low depending on a number of factors including product price, decision importance, etc.). Finally, they do not account for the fact that consumers tend to "flow back and forth" between the stages and one may not be predictive of the next (Voyer, 2007, p. 3).

Because of this, another model for consumer attention has been developed that may provide a more accurate perception of consumer receptivity toward communication efforts. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) addresses the limitations of its predecessors by accounting for consumer thought process and involvement. After a consumer is exposed to persuasive communication, his or her level of motivation to process the communication determines whether persuasion will operate along a central or a peripheral route (Cacioppo et. al., 1986). Actions that

stem from the central route tend to be based on logic while those that stem from the peripheral route tend to be driven by emotion (Van Lange et. al., 2012).

Emotional and Rational Appeals

According to Voyer (2007), "the central route, through which logical, reasoned persuasion flows, requires much evidence and reasoning" (p. 4). Consumers tend to engage the central route to persuasion when making a high involvement purchase, such as a car, a house, or an insurance policy. Many of these high-involvement goods are considered "utilitarian." They are instrumental and functional (Drolet et. al., 2007). To appeal to customers through the central route, advertisers must form a reasoned argument. Advertisers regularly use a "rational appeal" to address those interested in high involvement purchases. This approach "presents the promises and benefits [of a product] in a straightforward, no-nonsense way" (Tuckwell, 1995, p. 200). This could be accomplished in a number of ways including a simple description of the product features or a comparison of product quality to an industry competitor.

Alternatively, as Voyer (2007) explains, "the peripheral route, which includes emotional persuasion, relies on simple peripheral cues, such as celebrity endorsements, music, visuals, and sex" (p. 4). Consumers rely on the peripheral route for purchase decisions with lower involvement purchases, such as a candy bar or a magazine. In these situations, consumers have lower motivation to seek product benefits, and therefore the influence of peripheral cues like music or visuals increase advertising effectiveness (Larson, 2007). Many of these goods are considered "hedonic." They provide fun, pleasure and excitement (Drolet et. al., 2007). Emotional appeals move along the peripheral route by arousing feelings in the audience and emphasizing how psychological satisfaction can be attained via product usage (Voyer, 2007).

Where rational appeals rely on "objective evidence to convince the reader that a particular argument is reality," emotional advertisements "use various stimuli, like images or sounds, that are likely to elicit desired emotions" (Voyer, 2007, p. 5). As a whole, consumers respond better to emotional advertising as it is "more interesting, easier to follow, and easier to recall than arguments" (Tellis, 1998, p. 160). Emotional appeals also "do not raise the viewer's natural defenses, require less effort from the viewer, and are generally more interesting," so recall is enhanced (Voyer, 2007, p. 5).

As the Elaboration Likelihood Model specifies, emotion and logic are primary drivers of consumer engagement. Many researchers have experimented with different advertising content to determine when each appeal is more effective at predicting consumer action, but when executed well, emotional brand stories have shown to have several advantages over rational appeals. The benefit of rational appeals to the central route is that they tend to be more lasting, however, if an advertiser were searching for the most effective way to elicit positive perceptions through their frequent consumer interaction, he or she might be well advised to use an emotional appeal to the peripheral route. Despite this, advertisements in the United States tend to utilize more rational appeals, communicating information, evidence, and facts related to product benefits as well as reasons for buying rather than status symbols or image building (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2009).

Avenues for Emotional Influence & Transportation

While emotional appeals clearly influence consumers and impact their progression through the Elaboration Likelihood Model, as previously mentioned, an emotional advertisement can take on many forms. Studies strongly suggest that different media produce different

psychological outcomes (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). Print media are related to analytic cognition (reason) while electronic media are related to syncretic cognition (emotion). In 2010, the main venues of advertising were: television, online searches, magazines, newspapers, billboards, radio, and online banner ads (Albers-Miller & Stafford 1999). Each of these means of communication was reported to influence consumer purchase by 69%, 67%, 60%, 55%, 45%, 42%, and 41% respectively (Miller & Washington, 2006). Furthermore, studies have pointed to a greater consumer preference for emotional appeals in television advertisements as compared to rational appeals among respondents with different demographic and psychographics profiles (Mahapatra, 2013).

The above observations exhibit the strength of television advertisements in the realm of emotional advertising, but how can an advertiser encourage a consumer to bridge the gap between the attention and persuasion steps in the Elaboration Likelihood Model? Five distinct elements of persuasive advertising account for nearly 70% of advertising success (Cramphorn, 2014). While the first element, initial feelings toward the brand, is not under the advertiser's control, advertisers could pay special attention to the second most important element; projection, which is attained by a consumer who pictures interacting with the product (Cramphorn, 2014). Marchand (1985) states, "The burden of advertising, like other creative arts, is to create messages in which readers and consumers imagine themselves in the scenes depicted and identify with or aspire to the lifestyles shown" (p. 36). The more closely a brand is linked to the self, the more meaningful it becomes. Studies have shown that "self-brand connections" are positively related to brand attitude and behavioral intentions (Escalas, 2004). As was discussed previously, emotional appeals are only effective when they stimulate the emotional response of the viewer and present the idea that psychological satisfaction can be attained via product usage

(Voyer, 2007). When this has been achieved—when a television advertisement captivates a viewer's attention, employs vivid imagery, and generates strong consumer affect—the viewer becomes the ad's main character via a phenomenon called "transportation" (Green & Brock, 2000).

Transportation is typically applied to literary narratives; however, researchers have also applied this concept to television advertisements and the creation of brand narratives (Green & Brock, 2000). A basic narrative is a chain of events with an introduction or exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution or denouement (Martin, 2011). Berns et. al. (2013) found that transportation, the phenomenon in which a consumer vividly identifies with a story, has been shown to create lasting effects on the human brain. Furthermore, Green and Brock's (2000) study demonstrates that a positive relationship exists between level of transportation and narrative persuasiveness, in other words, "transportation is a mechanism whereby narratives may exert their power to change beliefs" (p. 718). In this study, even when a narrative was clearly labeled as fiction, real-world beliefs were affected by magnitude of transportation. It is important to note, however, that to be deemed transporting, ad stories cannot be overtly commercial. These stories must be perceived as produced by storytellers "who are intrinsically motivated by their inherent value," without an overtly persuasive aim (Van Laer et. al., 2014, p. 800). If advertisers wish to take advantage of the connection between transportation and persuasion, they must ensure that their brand is subtly present and does not overshadow a story's deeper meaning.

Dimensions of an Emotional Brand Story

Because transportation is indicative of persuasion, a number of researchers have looked at advertisement narratives to determine first, what the elements of a brand story are, and second,

how these elements can be used to enhance the possibility of transportation and persuasion (Green & Brock, 2000; Van Laer et. al., 2014). People naturally think narratively rather than argumentatively or paradigmatically (Woodside, 2010), and therefore, appealing to them through the language of storytelling requires less effort on the part of the consumer. Narrative processing has also been shown to enhance "self-brand connection" (Escalas, 2004). The more engaged an audience is in a narrative, the greater the strength of their self-brand connection and the better their chances of positive band attitudes (Escalas, 2004; Escalas & Stern, 2007; DelGadillo & Escalas, 2004). As was mentioned in the prior paragraph, literary researchers have translated television advertisements into brand narratives by assigning literary plotlines to their sequence of events (Green & Brock, 2000; Van Laer et. al., 2014). If a plot is present in a television advertisement, it can also be assumed that basic narratives and television advertisements alike contain other essential story elements including genre, setting, and character (Martin, 2011). Each of these story elements is an opportunity to identify with the consumer and elicit a response.

Stern and Gallagher's (1990) analysis of ad copy as rhetoric reveals that certain genres become popular in advertising depending on the sociocultural trends of the era. Each genre that Stern and Gallagher analyzed (lyric, epic, or ballad) is associated with particular sociocultural trends and is reinvented whenever these trends cycle back around. American cultural trends of the 60s such as environmental beautification, respect for ecology, and tolerance of idiosyncrasy are related to the dominance of lyrical advertising (the form which is associated with appreciation of beauty and expression of love). Stern and Gallagher point out an opportunity to increases the likelihood of consumer transportation through manipulation of genre (1990). When

the genre selected aligns with the current time period, consumers are more likely to identify with the characters in the ad.

Goldman (1992) found that different setting and character details have intense meanings to consumers and have been shown to help businesses relate to their target audiences. In 1985, one *Levi's* campaign went against the typical advertisements of the industry, depicting inaccessible characters and obscure situations. "In these advertisements," a campaign architect explained, "we didn't show beautiful people. We showed plump people, skinny people and handicapped people. We got close to real life" (p. 189). Goldman views this campaign as a perfect example of advertisers combining character and setting details to increase the viewer's ability to put him or herself into the ad. "Imperfection in Levi's campaign connotes an accessible, socially scaled-down level of 'cool,'" Goldman elaborates (p. 189). This effect is enhanced by the use of a street setting as opposed to a studio or natural setting. "The street implied freedom" Goldman expands, "—a world where constraining rules of work, school, and home are absent" (1992, p. 189).

Folse's et. al. (2012) study examines spokescharacters, or characters associated with a brand, and illustrates that characters not only provide a personality for the viewer to identify with, but provide a platform for sincerity, excitement, and competence—characteristics that, when present in a persuasive context, help to build equity and enhance brand trust, brand attitude, and willingness to pay a price premium. The strongest link expressed in the results was a relationship between sincere characters and brand trust.

All of the researchers mentioned above have pointed toward the importance of individual literary elements in advertising, but full literary analysis can be applied in its traditional sense to any ad with a narrative storyline. Literary analysis traditionally reviews the "what" (plot,

character, and setting details), the "how" (stylistic elements and point of view), and the "why" (theme and tone) of a storyline. This practice has been applied to books for centuries, but it is also frequently used in film analysis and can be applied to television advertisements in the same way.

For example, in Coca Cola's classic "Mean Joe Green" advertisement from 1979 (affectionately retitled "Hey Kid, Catch!"), a little boy (played by Tommy Okon) follows exhausted Steelers player Joe Green into the dugout, asking Mr. Green if he needs any help. Green utters a short no, and Okon says, "I just want you to know I think… I think… you're the best ever," before offering a reluctant Green his own Coke. As Green begins to drink the soda and Okon walks away, defeated, a brief jingle plays in the background: "A Coke and a smile makes me feel good…" Before the boy gets too far, Green says, "Hey kid, catch" and tosses his jersey to the eager youth (Hawkey, 1979).

It is hard to tell whether the plot, setting, or character details of this ad led to its being named one of the top ten commercials of all time by *TV Guide* (Shontell 2011), but it is certain that each of these elements contributed to its success. Okon's stuttered compliments compose the rising action of the plot, followed by the climax—when Green takes and drinks Okon's Coke, and finally the resolution—when Green tosses his jersey over to Okon. This basic plot surrounds a human-versus-human conflict that appeals to viewers through strong emotional cues and an ultimate victory for the child within each of us. It is also important to note that the Coke brand is what ultimately makes the interaction positive—the tone of the ad is solemn until Green takes the Coke and a smile spreads across his face. At the ad's conclusion, viewers are meant to assume that "Coke adds life," a message that Coke wanted to communicate so strongly that the words appear at the bottom of the screen before the ad fades to black.

Similarly, Chipotle's *Back to the Start* campaign has been labeled one of the most successful advertising efforts of the 21st century (Morrison, 2015). One of its main productions, *The Scarecrow,* was technically a piece of branded entertainment, as it ran for three minutes rather than the traditional span of approximately 30 seconds, but it is rich with opportunity for literary analysis and even contains metaphorical imagery. "In the last 15 years," Morrison states, "advertising and marketing, and the media it used to get out its messages, has experienced an incredible upheaval as digital media and interactivity changed the dynamics of how consumers see and pay attention brand messages." Because the 1979 "Mean Joe Green" ad was created before this upheaval, it is beneficial to see how literary analysis continues to apply to present-day advertising.

The Scarecrow ad opens on a farm, but the camera zooms out to reveal that the farm is painted on the side of a building under the words "crows incorporated." The camera zooms out further to show a baron dirt field and clouds of smoke coming from tall factory chimneys. Again, the camera zooms further away to reveal a skinny scarecrow standing in front of the building holding a toolbox. The scarecrow is sad and he enters the building reluctantly. Once inside, he sees different machines pumping hamburgers and chicken nuggets onto conveyer belts. The camera follows a hamburger to the end of a belt, where it slides out of a window and onto the table of a person waiting to eat it (Chan, 2011).

The scarecrow has come outside now, and as he looks at the people eating the food with sadness. A crow sits on his shoulder and pecks his cheek. The scarecrow turns to see a loose board in front of another store and bends to fix it. When he peers inside, he sees a chicken being injected with growth hormone. He nails the board back in place and moves to a loose steel panel on another store. He peers inside again and sees a sad cow trapped in a cage before helping

another scarecrow attach the panel back on to the building. The scarecrow again looks distressed, and a crow caws in his ear (Chan, 2011).

The scarecrow gets on a bus. As he gazes out the window, he sees expanses of dry brown fields and billboards. Suddenly, he sees a patch of peppers growing alongside the road. The train speeds forward. He arrives at his home with a lush green garden in front. The scarecrow picks a pepper and then begins harvesting vegetables from his field. He puts these in a truck and takes them into town where he cooks them up and makes a taco, offering it in front of a new stand. A small boy steps out of line at one of the crows incorporated windows and a line forms in front of the scarecrow's taco stand. The scarecrow shoos another crow away and the camera zooms out revealing the store's banner, which reads, "Chipotle: cultivate a better world" (Chan, 2011).

Chipotle's 2013 *The Scarecrow* ad tells a complex story about searching for natural hope in a factory-farmed world. The setting, what could be considered a dystopian version of Earth, warns the viewer that his or her community could easily transform into a wasteland of unnatural food and chain restaurants. A scarecrow living in a world ruled by crows is an unnatural picture itself. It goes against the traditional relationship, where the scarecrow fends off the crows, instead forming a backwards hierarchy. This metaphor would prompt the viewer to reconsider his or her position in the food industry. Where humans used to have some power in growing the food they ate, these skills of cultivation have deteriorated to the point that engineered foods now have a power over humans.

The emotions that the scarecrow exhibits—disgust, hopelessness, and desperation—attempt to summarize a growing grass-roots rejection of the fast food industry and its practices. Through the sequence of events, it is impossible not to imagine popular documentaries like Morgan Spurlok's *Supersize Me*, and the viewer might connect the big-hearted scarecrow with

Pixar's robot protagonist *Wall-E*, who spends the entire children's movie attempting to cultivate the only plant left on Earth. Chipotle's provision of a character that modern-day viewers can identify with seemingly takes Stern and Gallagher's (1990) analysis of ad copy as rhetoric to the extreme. When the scarecrow engages in a battle against the crows to change the way his community eats, he challenges the viewer to do the same and question his or her surroundings (Chan, 2011).

Storytelling and literary techniques provide a rich basis for analyzing advertisements on a deeper level. Peeling back these layers can contribute to a greater understanding of how and why consumers feel they can relate to an ad. Creating a realistic genre, setting, and characterization for the character of the consumer to step into could likely offer the business a whole host of associated benefits.

Preferred Emotional Storylines & Characteristics

Plot, genre, setting, and character elements can each be manipulated to increase persuasion among target demographics, but narrative analysis can also help determine what types of characteristics and stories consumers prefer overall. Researchers have defined a good story as one that is high in the following six characteristics. Good stories must: consist of actors engaged in actions to achieve goals; let the reader know what the actors are thinking and feeling; provide the reader insight about the personal evolution or change in the life of a character; explain why things happen and what caused things to happen; have a well-delineated beginning, middle, and ending; and focus on specific, particular events rather than generalizations or abstractions (Escalas, 1998). In short, people prefer stories that have purpose, emotion, evolution, clarity, temporal sequence and specificity. Finally, Escalas and Stern conducted a study to assess the role

of sympathy and empathy in emotional responses to advertising dramas. At the conclusion of the study, the researchers determined that classical dramas (unified, linear, resolved plots) are better than vignettes (unconnected, unorganized, repetitive plots) at generating sympathy and empathy responses, supporting the theory that well-developed characters and linear plot have a stronger ability to evoke sympathy and empathy than characters and plots that are not well-developed (Escalas, 2003).

Within stories that meet these basic structural requirements, certain plot, genre, setting, and character elements are universally preferred. Several researchers have turned their sights to mythology to analyze powerful stories—myths—in order to better understand how and why certain elements have endured throughout history (Campbell, 1972; Sachs, 2012; Brown et. al. 2013; Kessous, 2015). Myths contain four foundational components: explanation (the myth offers an answer or solution), meaning (the myth has direct application to the listener's life), story (the myth takes place in the world of symbol), and ritual (the myth offers the listener ways to play out the story in his or her own life) (Sachs, 2012). Sachs (2012) collected a variety of advertisements to determine whether they contain explanation, meaning, story, and ritual, concluding that these components can and have been used in advertising since the 1950s. The myth of the Marlboro Man, for example, explained a new way to smoke (filtered cigarettes), appealed to the listener's past in its connection with the western frontier, offered the listener the opportunity to become a rugged cowboy, and offered a way to obtain that reality through the ritual of smoking Marlboro cigarettes (Sachs, 2012).

There are many types of myths and, as previously mentioned, many ways that elements within these stories can be manipulated to strengthen a consumer's relationship with the ad's main character, but later comments in Sachs' (2012) study suggest that a certain type of myth

(and thereby a certain combination of story elements) may make audiences more perceptive toward an ad. Similar details pervade across myths told in different geographic locations around the world, indicating that people prefer plot and characterization details that align with the structure of one ultimate myth: the Hero's Journey (Campbell, 1972).

Anyone who has seen *Alice in Wonderland, Lord of the Rings, The Matrix,* or *Groundhog's Day* has already encountered the plot structure of the Hero's Journey, also called the monomyth. According to Sachs (2012), these stories provide readers the opportunity to picture themselves as the central "nobody-turned-hero" character. Despite its frequent appearance, the Hero's Journey structure continues to resonate with its audiences without diminished effects (Brown et. al., 2013; Kessous, 2015). This stronger consumer affect in turn increases likelihood of transportation, creating the same "self-brand connection" that has been associated with increased brand attitude (Escalas, 2004; Escalas & Stern, 2007; DelGadillo & Escalas, 2004). By aligning the specific plot, setting, and character elements of a brand narrative with those in the monomyth, advertisers may mimic this favored structure and reap its associated benefits.

The Hero's Journey plot contains a complex series of events that are classified into four acts: separation, decent, initiation, and return (Campbell, 1972; Campbell et. al., 1990). Essentially, the Hero's Journey begins with 'a nobody' in an ordinary world who follows a call to adventure. At first, he refuses, but in running away from his destiny, he comes upon a mysterious mentor who encourages him to continue on the path to enlightenment. After engaging in a battle and making a discovery, the hero is resurrected and returns home, sharing his newfound knowledge with the community (Campbell, 1972; Campbell et. al., 1990). DeGloma defines this journey as an awakening. "Awakening narratives are important mechanisms of

mnemonic and autobiographical revision that individuals use to redefine past experiences and relationships and plot future courses of action while explaining major transformations of worldview" (DeGloma, 2010, p. 520). An awakening narrative persuades the main character to the extent that he or she reorganizes his or her current understanding of the world, indicating that stories with an awakening have powerful persuasive capabilities.

The Hero's Journey also includes a number of distinct characters. Myths like that of the Marlboro Man give the brand purpose in an advertisement by assigning it one of two main roles: mentor or hero. After establishing an introduction or exposition, rising action, and climax, these ad narratives differ in their resolution. In both Brand-as-Hero and Brand-as-Mentor ads, the consumer can identify with the main character; however, Brand-as-Hero ads solve the problem by presenting the brand as the solution and depriving the reader of a personal awakening, whereas Brand-as-Mentor ads allow the hero to solve the problem without brand dependence. In these ads, the brand simply exists in the background, providing a supportive, mentor-like presence (Sachs, 2012). Anthropological studies have shown that the aforementioned monomyth story structure is fundamental to many cultures and therefore resonates strongly with consumers, providing a seemingly universal entry point for brands wishing to form emotional connections.

Hypotheses

This study seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge regarding the strength of brand narratives in television advertisements by analyzing the relationship between television advertisements that employ the Brand-as-Mentor storyline and an increase in the positive perception of the brand. It also seeks to shed light on differences in consumer attitude depending

upon the presence of Brand-as-Mentor or Brand-as-Hero advertisements within different product categories. The following hypotheses and research questions will be tested:

H1: Individuals will indicate a more positive ad attitude after viewing a Brand-as-Mentor ad than they will after viewing a Brand-as-Hero ad.

While both the Brand-as-Mentor and Brand-as-Hero narratives employ the monomyth structure that has been shown to heighten self-brand connection and transportation (Sachs, 2012; Campbell, 1972), the likelihood of transportation decreases when an ad is overtly commercial (Van Laer et. al., 2014). When the Brand-as-Hero narrative concludes with the brand as the solution, individuals may assume the story has no inherent value. The Brand-as-Hero ad would then forfeit the ability to increase positive consumer ad attitude, an established benefit of transportation.

H2: Individuals will indicate a more positive brand attitude after viewing a Brand-as-Mentor ad than they will after viewing a Brand-as-Hero ad.

The studies by DelGadillo and Escalas (2004) maintain that positive brand attitude is positively correlated with self-brand connection and narrative involvement (Escalas, 2004; Escalas & Stern, 2007; DelGadillo & Escalas, 2004). While both the Brand-as-Mentor and Brand-as-Hero narratives employ the monomyth structure that has been shown to heighten self-brand connection and transportation (Sachs, 2012; Campbell, 1972), awakening experiences are said to increase brain activity through world-view transformation, and therefore, increase narrative involvement (DeGloma, 2010). It would then be reasonable to suppose that the presence of awakening in the Brand-as-Mentor ad

would increase narrative involvement and lead to a more positive brand attitude than is indicated in relation to the Brand-as-Hero ad.

H3: Individuals will indicate a higher level of empathy with characters in a Brand-as-Mentor ad than they will with characters in a Brand-as-Hero ad.

Mentioned above, the likelihood of transportation decreases when an ad is overtly commercial (Van Laer et. al., 2014). When the Brand-as-Hero narrative concludes with the brand as the solution, individuals may assume the story has no inherent value and be less likely to transport. Escalas (2003) points out that consumers first experience sympathy with an advertisement, then, if they continue to identify with the ad's main character, move to a new stage where they express empathy. The hindrance of lower potential for transportation may negatively affect empathy expression in the Brand-as-Hero narrative.

H4: Females will indicate a higher degree of empathy after viewing a Brand-as-Mentor ad than males.

Studies have found that emotional ads appeal better to women than men (Cheng, 2008). Women also have been shown to better express their feelings and correctly interpret the feelings of others, two abilities that are fundamental to the experience of empathy (Callan & Gallois, 1986; Markus & Oyserman, 1989). This hypothesis was formed under the assumption that the Brand-as-Mentor narrative offers increased opportunities for transportation mentioned in H2. The gender difference is also expected between male and female responses to the Brand-as-Hero narrative.

H5: Females will indicate a more positive brand attitude after viewing a Brand-as-Mentor ad than males.

Because self-brand connection increases with empathy and females are hypothesized to have higher empathy responses, females are likely to experience the same positive attitude in relation to the Brand-as-Mentor ad as is experienced in H2, but slightly magnified. The gender difference is also expected between male and female responses to the Brand-as-Hero narrative.

Method

A laboratory experiment was chosen to test these hypotheses and provide insight into these research questions. While a field experiment might offer more generalizability, a laboratory experiment allowed for the proper control of extraneous variables to tease out relevant effects. Brand narratives that describe the entirety of a television advertisement were developed. Four of the advertisement narratives featured a Brand as Hero storyline while four featured a Brand as Mentor storyline. In addition, two product categories were chosen with each category featuring one hedonic product and one utilitarian product. The hedonic good was Oreo cookies, the utilitarian good was Emerald nuts, the hedonic service was Olive Garden restaurants, and the utilitarian service was Southwest airlines. For each of these groupings, two ads were created; one featuring a Brand as Mentor storyline and one featuring a Brand as Hero storyline. See figure A below for a visual breakdown of each group. Appendix B contains the full text of all eight brand narratives.

FIGURE A: NARRATIVE GROUPINGS

	8 Scenarios	
	Food	Services
Utilitarian	1. Emerald Mentor	5. Southwest Mentor
Utilitarian	2. Emerald Hero	6. Southwest Hero
Hedonic	3. Oreo Mentor	7. Olive Garden Mentor
Hedonic	4. Oreo Hero	8. Olive Garden Hero

	Group 1	Group 2
# Participants	36	36
First Ad	1	2
Second Ad	6	7
	Group 3	**Group 4**
# Participants	36	36
First Ad	3	4
Second Ad	8	5

Four surveys were created, each featuring two of the eight total advertisement narratives. As such, there were four groups that received distinct ads. Section one of the survey included questions regarding demographics. After section one was submitted, the first story appeared. Once respondents selected “next” at the bottom of the screen, they were prompted to answer a set of questions to assess ad attitudes, brand attitudes, price perceptions, and empathy. After respondents answered these questions, the process repeated with a second story and another set of questions identical to the prior described series. See appendix A for a complete survey.

Respondents were recruited from a small south-central college in Pennsylvania. For each survey, 361 invitations were sent electronically for a total of 1,444 invitations. We expected a 10% response rate therefore each survey would be taken by approximately 36 individuals. The actual response rate was 14%. Of the 1,444 invitations distributed, the final sample consisted of 208 respondents with responses evenly distributed across all four surveys.

Results & Discussion

The large sample size obtained allowed the use of both descriptive and inferential statistics, with findings both supporting and contradicting expected results. Initial expectations based on the literature review were that the presence of a Brand-as-Mentor character in an ad narrative would improve ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and empathy across the board. Hypotheses also indicated that results would differ between male and female respondents (females would exhibit better brand attitudes and a higher degree of empathy).

Preliminary analysis utilizing descriptive statistics demonstrates that the mean ad attitudes across all product brands are more positive among those who viewed a brand-as-mentor advertisement as opposed to those who viewed a brand-as-hero advertisement. This supports hypothesis one, indicating that consumers may be more likely to have a positive attitude toward an ad that uses a mentor character as opposed to a hero character. Furthermore, mean data reveals that respondents have a higher level of empathy toward characters in the brand-as-mentor advertisement than characters in the brand-as-hero advertisement, supporting hypothesis 3. Unexpectedly, brand attitudes across all product brands are more positive among those that viewed a brand-as-hero advertisement than those that viewed a brand-as-mentor advertisement. This observation directly conflicts with hypothesis two, which claims that respondents would have higher brand attitudes after viewing a brand-as-mentor narratives.

To test whether the above outcomes would be present in the population as a whole, inferential analysis was conducted. Table 1 presents the results of T-Tests exploring differences between brand-as-mentor and brand-as-hero ads on the variables ad attitude, brand attitude, and empathy. While mean ad attitudes for brand-as-mentor ads were higher than mean ad attitudes for brand-as-hero ads across all four product categories, only three categories were statistically

significant at the $p < .05$ level. The ad attitude variable was a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (negative attitude) to 5 (positive attitude). The T-Test reveals that these differences are significant at the .05 level (Emerald: $p < .016$, Oreo: $p < .001$, Olive Garden: $p < .008$). A similar scenario played out when it came time to analyze brand attitude. Mean brand attitudes for brand-as-mentor ads were lower than mean brand attitudes for brand-as-hero ads across all four product categories; however, only one category was statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level (Emerald: $p < .016$). This trend indicates that while respondents demonstrated statistically significant higher attitude scores toward ads containing brand-as-mentor characters, when it came to attitude scores toward the underlying brand, the brand featuring a hero character was preferred in one group (Emerald), while in the other three groups, there was no statistically significant difference between brand-as-hero and brand-as-mentor characters. We can't draw inferences between character type and brand attitude due to this lack of statistical significance.

While the statistical analysis provides support for hypotheses one and three, the above-mentioned trends directly contradict hypothesis two. This could have occurred for a number of reasons. Research has shown that consumers need to be exposed to an ad a certain number of times before they begin associating it with a brand (Tellis, 1988). Maybe due to the more cognitively challenging storyline of mentor ads, consumers need more exposures to both ads to create a cumulative brand effect over time and accurately complete a brand attitude assessment. Brand building might also require a different kind of message than simple good or service advertising (Tellis, 1998). Emotional reaction toward an ad is one thing, but development of feelings toward brand overall is a different process (Tellis, 1998). Finally, existing brand biases may have effected responses. It might have been beneficial to re-norm responses based on an

indication of existing brand attitudes, but this practice would likely have added too much complexity to this study, especially given its time constraints.

Table 1: H1-H3

T-Test: Emerald Grouping Variable

Significant Variable	pvalue	Mentor N	Mentor Average	Hero N	Hero Average	Confidence
H1: Ad Attitude	0	38	2.3490	37	3.0340	99%
H2: Brand Attitude	0.016	38	3.1610	37	2.9700	90%
H3: Empathy	0.07	38	3.6950	37	3.4050	x

T-Test: Oreo Grouping Variable

Significant Variable	pvalue	Mentor N	Mentor Average	Hero N	Hero Average	Confidence
H1: Ad Attitude	0.34	38	2.7760	44	2.9320	x
H2: Brand Attitude	0.001	38	3.2240	44	2.7300	99%
H3: Empathy	0.818	38	3.5260	44	3.4850	x

T-Test: Olive Grouping Variable

Significant Variable	pvalue	Mentor N	Mentor Average	Hero N	Hero Average	Confidence
H1:Ad Attitude	0.005	37	3.2430	37	2.6120	99%
H2: Brand Attitude	0.008	37	3.6740	37	3.1700	99%
H3: Empathy	0.027	37	3.7120	37	3.3420	95%

T-Test: SWA Grouping Variable

Significant Variable	pvalue	Mentor N	Mentor Average	Hero N	Hero Average	Confidence
H1: Ad Attitude	0.879	44	3.2100	38	3.3550	x
H2: Brand Attitude	0.355	44	3.6190	38	3.6020	x
H3: Empathy	0.705	44	3.7420	38	3.6840	x

This above exhibit contains four tables, one for Emerald, one for Oreo, one for Olive Garden, and one for Southwest Airlines. Each table contains several columns. The left side specifies the significant variable analyzed, Brand Attitude, Ad Attitude, or Empathy. The p-value column indicates whether the results are significant, and the far right “confidence level” column specifies the degree of confidence in that significance (90%, 95%, or 99%). The ‘N’ column indicates the sample size for each variable once unfinished surveys and blank questions were eliminated.

Finally, the 'Average' column indicates the average location that a respondent would fall on the brand attitude, ad attitude, or empathy scale.

After data collection, it became clear that there were not enough male respondents to analyze hypotheses four or five, those based on gender differences. The highest rate of male responses was 23 (for the Oreo advertisement), compared with 59 female responses. Statistical significance could not be derived from a sample smaller than 36, and therefore these hypotheses could not be analyzed using inferential statistics. Across all brand categories, the mean female responses (for ad attitude, brand attitude, and empathy) were greater than the mean male responses, but again, no statistical significance can be gleaned from these results.

Limitations & Future Research

As with any study, this research has a number of limitations. Each respondent's state of mind and preexisting brand attitudes may have affected responses to each ad. Re-norming all responses based on a question to control for brand bias would not have been the best solution to these issues, but future researchers may wish to begin the survey with a series of Likert-type questions (on a scale of 1-5 from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) asking respondents to indicate their attitudes regarding approximately 10 brands. The four brands with developed narratives would be intermixed within these. At the end of the survey, respondents could be asked to answer the same questions. The difference between initial responses and responses following exposure to an ad narrative would indicate a change in brand attitude.

There were also limitations related to the nature of the advertisement. Narrative stories and television scripts depend upon the reader to imagine their sequence of events. Viewing an actual television advertisement is an entirely different experience than reading a narrative.

Ultimately, narrative development was the best way to control for extraneous variables. While a video or print ad may have been more captivating, variables like production quality, color palette, choice of actors, or musical selections could have easily affected responses. The creation of 8 different advertisement narratives from scratch was the best way to minimize errors and keep respondents focused on pure narrative storyline. Finally, the survey contained a limited set of questions. The survey was kept short to minimize drop-out-rate, but this survey could be constructed in a number of different ways that would contribute additional valuable insights to this exploration.

There are seemingly endless opportunities to expand on this research. Marketers could look more closely at the relationship between ad attitude and brand character, analyze different types of characters in advertising, and test other characteristics of literary analysis like setting, plot, or tone. Qualitative researchers could catalogue existing advertisements based upon any of these details as well and compare the presence of these characteristics with how the ad performed historically.

While marketers frequently talk about brand narratives and storytelling, it seems that they often just use these words to get a point across without taking them seriously. In relying on haphazard ad construction based upon their own experiences, some marketers have failed to consider the rich data that literary fields can offer. A more scientific approach to creation of ad narratives could be immensely beneficial for organizations, and I look forward to seeing how future research may take shape.

Reflections on Directed Research and Interdisciplinary Studies

When I sat down to create an honors in the discipline proposal, my mind was reeling. Crafting an initial plan for in-depth research brought me to the sudden realization that, despite being surrounded by people who supported exploration and discovery for my entire life, this was my first opportunity to pour myself into understanding the nuances of my field. Although I have always thrived in an atmosphere of learning and curiosity, participating in HID was my first opportunity to complete in-depth, long-term research and direct my efforts toward a larger goal. Through working on this project, I feel I have created something of my own that will contribute to a greater understanding in the world of storytelling and human connection. If you would like to learn more about my journey through this process, please take a look at Appendix C.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY EXAMPLE

Welcome!

Thank you for participating in this study. Your feedback will contribute to our current understanding of advertising and consumer brand perception. This survey is designed to gather information for a research project exploring how individuals respond to different types of advertising. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty. If you initially decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time. The information gathered during this study will remain confidential with all records to be kept private and locked in a file during the study. Only the researchers listed on this form will have access to the study data and information. The results of the research will be published in the form of an undergraduate paper and may be published in a professional journal or presented at professional meetings. In any report or publication, the researcher will not provide any information that would make it possible to identify you. If you have any questions concerning the research project, you may contact Lindsay Sympson at sympsonl@etown.edu or Dr. Bryan Greenberg at greenbergb@etown.edu. Should you have any questions about your participant rights involved in this research you may contact the Elizabethtown College Institutional Review Board Submission Coordinator, Pat Blough at (717)361-1133 or via email at bloughp@etown.edu. By clicking through to complete the survey, I am certifying that I am 18 years of age or older, that I have read the above information, and that I am willing to participate in this study. A copy of this consent is available from the above named researchers.

Survey Section One

1. What is your gender?

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male

2. For each item listed, please select the one response that best expresses your level of agreement with that statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I talk about myself frequently.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My online self-disclosures usually are accurate reflections of who I really am.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
When I am self-disclosing, I am consciously aware of what I am revealing.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Advertisement One

Please read the following advertisement narrative. When you are finished, click next to answer questions based on this description.

The ad opens on a town where a mailman is walking down the sidewalk, delivering envelopes and packages to people. He waves cheerfully to everyone he meets. The mailman walks back to his truck and opens the back doors. The truck is completely empty, and he breathes a sigh of relief. Suddenly, he feels a light tap on the arm. He turns around and looks down to see a little girl. She bashfully offers him a package wrapped in crinkled brown paper with an address scrawled in crayon. He takes the package and she thanks him before turning around and running up the steps of a house to his right. He stands and looks at the package for a moment, scratching his head. He climbs into the front seat of his truck and sets his GPS to the address listed on the package.

He drives for an hour, and eventually pulls up to a dark house and climbs the stairs to leave the package on the doorstep. When he approaches the door, he sees a notice that reads, "Moved to army base in Fort Collins, please forward all mail to the address below." The mailman sighs and looks down at the package. He thinks for a moment, then takes a notepad and pen from his shirt pocket and writes down the address. He descends the stairs as the sun begins to set and gets back into the truck. He enters the new address into his GPS and starts driving. After hours, he finds himself driving though the mountains. The GPS loses signal and the truck begins to slide in a light snow that is now falling. He pulls off to the side of the road and opens his glove compartment, getting out a paper map and a container of Emerald nuts. He tosses a handful of nuts into his mouth, turns the collar of his US Postal Service uniform up to protect his neck from the cold, and begins hiking up the mountain.

When the mailman reaches the top, he sees several bunkers and knocks on the door of one. A man comes to the door and the postal worker asks for the addressee of the package. The man nods and leads the mailman inside, over to a cot where another soldier sits looking at a picture of a woman and the little girl that handed the package to the mailman earlier that day. The other soldier looks up, and the mailman hands him the package. He slowly unwraps it, and inside, there is a teddy bear with a note that reads, "To daddy, love Annie." The soldier stands up with tears in his eyes and shakes the mailman's hand. The mailman smiles and nods and begins his trek back down the mountain feeling satisfied.

Survey Section Two: Ad Attitudes

3. Please select the option that best represents your opinion.

	Negative				Positive
My overall reaction toward this ad is:	○	○	○	○	○

4. -

	Boring				Interesting
This ad was:	○	○	○	○	○

5. -

	Good				Bad
This ad was:	○	○	○	○	○

6. -

	Dislikable				Likable
This ad was:	○	○	○	○	○

7. -

	Funny				Not Funny
This ad was:	○	○	○	○	○

8. -

	Unpleasant				Pleasant
This ad was:	○	○	○	○	○

9. -

	Informative				Uninformative
This ad was:	○	○	○	○	○

10. -

	Not Entertaining				Entertaining
This ad was:	○	○	○	○	○

11. For each item listed, please select the one response that best expresses your level of agreement with the following statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This ad narrative consists of actors engaged in actions to achieve goals.	○	○	○	○	○
This ad narrative lets me know what the actors are thinking / feeling.	○	○	○	○	○
This ad narrative has a clear beginning, middle, and ending.	○	○	○	○	○

Survey Section Two: Brand Attitudes

12. For each item listed, please select the one response that best expresses your level of agreement with that statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
This ad narrative made me feel the brand 'Emerald' is right for me.	○	○	○	○	○
This ad narrative gave me a good feeling about buying Emerald nuts.	○	○	○	○	○
This ad narrative made me feel that eating Emerald nuts would say something good about me.	○	○	○	○	○
This ad narrative will lead me to buy more Emerald nuts.	○	○	○	○	○

Survey Section Two: Price Perceptions

13. How much would you pay for a package of Emerald nuts?

Survey Section Two: Empathy Assessment

14. For each item listed, please select the one response that best expresses your level of agreement with that statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I could understand how the main character felt in the situation described in the ad narrative.	○	○	○	○	○
I felt the same emotions as the main character described in the ad narrative.	○	○	○	○	○
I felt like I was "right there" in the ad narrative.	○	○	○	○	○

APPENDIX B: BRAND NARRATIVES

Oreo Hero:

The ad opens on a school and the sound of an end-of-class bell. It is drizzling and gray outside, and crowds of students begin exiting the front doors of the building. The camera follows one young girl who is walking alone. As she walks forward, her shoe gets stuck in gum. She jerks her foot forward, but then a book she is carrying falls from her arms and the cover opens, spilling notecards onto the sidewalk. She shakes her head and bends down to pick up the cards.

The ad cuts to the girl's front yard, where she walks up to enter a suburban home. When she is inside, she peeks into her father's office and waves to him. He looks up and waves, but then mouths "I'm on a call," and apologizes to the colleagues connected with him on Skype. The girl goes into the kitchen and opens the pantry. On the top shelf, she sees a package of Oreos. She smiles and pulls a chair from the kitchen table, climbing up on it and reaching for the package. When she pulls it down, she peels back the top to reveal a full box. A smile spreads across her face and she pours a glass of milk. Suddenly the room becomes sunny.

Oreo Mentor:

The ad opens on a school and the sound of an end-of-class bell. It is drizzling and gray outside, and crowds of students begin exiting the front doors of the building. The camera follows one young girl who is walking alone. As she walks forward, her shoe gets stuck in gum. She jerks her foot forward, but then a book she is carrying falls from her arms and the cover opens, spilling notecards onto the sidewalk. She shakes her head and bends down to pick up the cards.

The ad cuts to the girl's front yard, where she walks up to enter a suburban home. When she is inside, she peeks into her father's office and waves to him. He looks up and waves, but then mouths "I'm on a call," and apologizes to the colleagues connected with him on Skype. The girl goes into the kitchen and starts to open the pantry, but then she stops and thinks for a moment. She walks back out of the house and starts down the sidewalk. She finally stops in front of a print and copy shop and she looks up at the sign, pondering something. The girl goes inside and talks to the man behind the counter, describing her father. He goes back behind the counter, does some work on the computer, and prints out a long cardboard cutout of the girl's father. She carries it home under her arm, stopping on the way back to buy a package of Oreos. Next, the camera shows the girl and her father in the kitchen laughing and dipping Oreos in milk. It pans over to the father's office, where his coworker is addressing him via Skype and the cardboard cutout is sitting in his chair, smiling.

Emerald Hero:

The ad opens on a town where a mailman is walking down the sidewalk, delivering envelopes and packages to people. He waves cheerfully to everyone he meets. He hands a letter to a teenage girl waiting eagerly by the mailbox. She opens it and yells, "I got in!" She turns around and runs up the porch steps where her mother is waiting in the doorway. He goes to the next house and drops a package on the doorstep. A little boy runs out and grabs it, curiously shaking the box. A woman sitting on the porch in a swing smiles and waves at the mailman.

As the mailman walks on, he becomes hungry and tired. He climbs into his mail-truck. He wipes his brow and reaches into the glove compartment to pull out a bag of Emerald almonds. He eats a few and drives a short distance to start delivering mail again in the next town

over. At the end, the words “imagine the possibilities of a handful of energy” appear with the Emerald Nuts logo.

Emerald Mentor:

The ad opens on a town where a mailman is walking down the sidewalk, delivering envelopes and packages to people. He waves cheerfully to everyone he meets. He hands a letter to a teenage girl waiting eagerly by the mailbox. She opens it and yells, “I got in!” She turns around and runs up the porch steps where her mother is waiting in the doorway. He goes to the next house and drops a package on the doorstep. A little boy runs out and grabs it, curiously shaking the box. A woman sitting on the porch in a swing smiles and waves at the mailman.

The mailman walks back to his truck and opens the back doors. The truck is completely empty, and he breathes a sigh of relief. Suddenly, he feels a light tap on the arm. He turns around and looks down to see a little girl. She bashfully offers him a package wrapped in crinkled brown paper with an address scrawled in crayon. He takes the package and she thanks him before turning around and running up the steps of a house to his right. He stands and looks at the package for a moment, scratching his head. He climbs into the front seat of his truck and sets his GPS to the address listed on the package.

He drives for an hour, and eventually pulls up to a dark house and climbs the stairs to leave the package on the doorstep. When he approaches the door, he sees a notice that reads, “Moved to army base in Fort Collins, please forward all mail to the address below.” The mailman sighs and looks down at the package. He thinks for a moment, then takes a notepad and pen from his shirt pocket and writes down the address. He descends the stairs as the sun begins to set and gets back into the truck. He enters the new address into his GPS and starts driving.

After hours, he starts driving up into the mountains. The GPS loses signal and the truck begins to slide in a light snow that is now falling. He pulls off to the side of the road and opens his glove compartment, pulling out a paper map and a container of Emerald nuts. He tosses a handful of nuts into his mouth, turns the collar of his US Postal Service uniform up to protect his neck from the cold, and begins hiking up the mountain.

When the mailman reaches the top, he sees several bunkers and knocks on the door of one. A man comes to the door and the postal worker asks for the addressee of the package. The man nods and leads the mailman inside, over to a cot where another soldier sits looking at a picture of a woman and the little girl that handed the package to the mailman earlier that day. The other soldier looks up, and the mailman hands him the package. He slowly unwraps it, and inside, there is a teddy bear with a note that reads, "To daddy, love Annie." The soldier stands up with tears in his eyes and shakes the mailman's hand. The mailman smiles and nods and begins his trek back down the mountain feeling satisfied.

Southwest Hero:

The ad opens on the dimly lit hallway of an airport. An old janitor is sweeping the floor, and as he walks by the desks of the different airlines, he smiles and nods at each of the workers. As he moves he pushes a cart of cleaning supplies along. The old man walks back to a closet and stows the cart inside. He crosses the hall and sits down in a small cluttered office. He looks at his desk phone and realizes there is a missed call and voicemail. He listens to the voicemail and his expression changes from surprise to joy. He hangs up the phone and immediately opens the web browser on his computer. He types "cheap flights" into the search bar at the top of the screen and clicks on the first result.

At first, he seems pleased. He enters his location and destination and then he squints to look at the prices. Under the main ticket price is small print that reads "baggage fee - $100." He gets out his glasses and looks harder at the screen. Under that fine print, there is more, smaller fine print that reads, "armrest fee - $80; leg space fee - $65; oxygen fee - $27." He sits back in his chair and sighs in disbelief. Every other airline that he looks at is the same way. He begins to get discouraged when he types "Southwest" at the top of the screen. When he looks at the fine print beneath the price, it says "no added fees" and even smaller than that, "no, we're not kidding." The man grins and books the ticket. The camera cuts to a man getting off the plane later. When he walks out into the gate area, he sees his family wave. As he walks toward them, his daughter steps forward holding his brand new baby granddaughter.

Southwest Mentor:

The ad opens on the dimly lit hallway of an airport. An old janitor is sweeping the floor, and as he walks by the desks of the different airlines, he smiles and nods at each of the workers. As he moves he pushes a cart of cleaning supplies along. The old man walks back to a closet and stows the cart inside. He crosses the hall and sits down in a small cluttered office. He looks at his desk phone and realizes there is a missed call and voicemail. He listens to the voicemail and his expression changes from surprise to joy. He hangs up the phone and immediately opens the web browser on his computer. He types "cheap flights" into the search bar at the top of the screen and clicks on the first result.

The camera cuts to the man boarding a Southwest plane. He is smiling and helping those around him put their luggage into the overhead bins. He sits in a middle seat, and when two passengers sit down on either side of him, he begins telling them all about his family. When the

flight attendant comes over, he opens his wallet, smiling, and string of pictures unfolds. The flight attendant laughs and nods. Later, when the old man is getting off the plane, he warmly shakes the hands of each of his seatmates. When he walks out into the gate area, he sees his family wave. As he walks toward them, his daughter steps forward holding a brand new baby granddaughter.

Olive Garden Hero:

The ad opens on a little girl sitting at the breakfast table. She is eating a bowl of cereal and her single father is rushing around the kitchen, looking for his wallet and keys. When he finds them, he walks over to his daughter and kisses the top of her head. She looks up at him and her lower lip begins to quiver. She is sad because she has to go to the doctor for a check-up and she is afraid of shots. He reassures her that everything will be okay, but she is not convinced. He squeezes her hand and rushes out the door.

When the little girl is done with her breakfast, the babysitter picks up her dishes and asks whether she is ready to go. The little girl shakes her head and her eyes begin to well with tears, but the babysitter pulls her in for a hug and tells her it will be over in only a second. The two of them get in the car and drive to the doctor. The little girl sits inside an examination room while the doctor goes through his routine. When it comes time for the shots, the babysitter takes the little girl's hand and the little girl squeezes her eyes shut. The doctor administers two shots and offers the little girl a smiley face bandage, but the little girl just rubs the sore spots on her arm and looks angrily at the doctor.

As they are driving home from the Doctor's office, the little girl sits in the back seat staring out the window. She still looks sad about her shot, and the babysitter glances back in the

rearview mirror. The babysitter gets an idea and exits the highway. The two pull into the parking lot, and when the little girl realizes they are not yet home, she looks confused. The babysitter gets out of the car and opens the little girl's door, taking her hand and pulling her outside. The girl looks up, and when she realizes that they are at the Olive Garden, her face breaks into a huge grin. The two go inside and sit down together, laughing over pasta and breadsticks.

Olive Garden Mentor:

The ad opens on a little girl sitting at the breakfast table. She is eating a bowl of cereal and her single father is rushing around the kitchen, looking for his wallet and keys. When he finds them, he walks over to his daughter and kisses the top of her head. She looks up at him and her lower lip begins to quiver. She is sad because she has to go to the doctor for a check-up and she is afraid of shots. He reassures her that everything will be okay, but she is not convinced. He squeezes her hand and rushes out the door.

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As they are driving home from the Doctor's office, the little girl sits in the back seat staring out the window. She still looks sad about her shot, and the babysitter glances back in the

rearview mirror. The ad cuts to the little girl's father in a meeting. He is presenting financial data, but he keeps thinking about his daughter and how sad she was in the morning. He trails off a few times and is unable to get his bearings. He suddenly ends the meeting. As his coworkers start to object and ask questions, he runs out the door and searches in his contacts for a phone number. While he is on the phone, he walks out to his car and begins driving. He places an order for Olive Garden ToGo and pulls in to the restaurant parking lot. The hostess meets him at the door with his order, and he smiles and runs back to his car. He texts the babysitter about his plans and drives back home where he begins setting the plates and food out.

The babysitter parks at the end of the driveway and the little girl gets out of the back seat, almost stepping on a meatball. She laughs and looks up to see a whole trail of meatballs leading to the backyard. When she reaches the end of the trail, she looks up and sees her father standing in front of a picnic table set with pasta and breadsticks. She runs to give him a hug and the three sit around the table, eating and laughing.

APPENDIX C: REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Initial Research Efforts

I had a few ideas in mind when I developed the early plans for my project, but my efforts were guided by the intention to conduct solid interdisciplinary research that would contribute useful insights to both the English department and the business department. The ultimate goal of marketers is to understand and communicate with their target population, and the ultimate goal of professional writers is to find the best way to translate thoughts and intentions into language. Although some might consider the pairing of these majors unconventional, there is a natural association between these courses of study, and this motivated me to combine my passions for exploration and explanation throughout my four years here. Uniting the analytical and scientific standards of a business honors project with the creative and exploratory nature of an English project was not easy, but in the end, I felt my choice of topic was an excellent reflection of the crossover between these disciplines.

My initial proposal was inspired by the story of my mother's retirement. My mother was ready to retire from her job as a children's librarian for a number of reasons, but one experience struck her in particular. On the first day of school in her thirtieth year, she set a class of kindergartners loose among the shelves as she had done every prior year. After three kindergartners brought their new books away from the checkout desk, they sat on high wooden steps in the corner of the library nestled beside giant stuffed versions of Corduroy Bear and Babar the Elephant. They carefully set their books down on their laps, and, without opening the covers, began tapping on the corners, waiting for the pages to change.

As I discovered through my preliminary research, this experience is a snapshot of a greater phenomenon playing out across the country. Peeling back the layers of this generational gap was like opening a can of worms. Digital natives with an innate affinity for computer technology are joining society in droves. The population is becoming divided into those who established themselves in a world before digital technology and those who cant imagine life without it. As early as 2005, experts observed instances in which the tendencies of these tech-savvy individuals clashed with now antiquated structures (Long, 2005). The changing perceptions caused by a boom of technology are permeating every industry, from business to education, and demanding a shift in current norms.

Exploring the Impact of Technology on English & Business Disciplines

The next phase of my research involved delving into these technological changes to understand how they would affect the English department, the business department, and any interactions between the two. In searching for insights related to the English department, the first wave of research that I collected discussed the necessary evolution of current technical writing strategies to address the increasing demand for "bite-sized information," interactive content, and bidirectional feedback (Andersen, 2014). It also emphasized a massive shortage of professional writers with the ability to adjust to generational changes in attention span and reading patterns (Carr, 2011; McSpadden, 2015; Sweet et. al., 2015).

When I began searching for information pertaining to the business department, however, I found a very different story. Many articles discussed the advent of social media and its impact on advertising efforts. This new category of connection, which encompasses brand names from Facebook to Instagram, provides a platform for "self-disclosure," or speech that regards the self

and personal opinions, attitudes, and interests, like never before (Naaman et. al., 2011). Findings indicate that self-disclosure provides a release of dopamine in the brain that is intrinsically rewarding. As platforms proliferate, consumer brand engagement is going through a seismic shift that demands individual attention and strong connection. I found a seemingly endless supply of articles aiming to address this change, encouraging Businesses to tell a "brand story," produce branded entertainment, and use these materials to connect with consumers on an individual basis through social media (Woodside et. al., 2014; Zak, 2015).

While human attention span studies cite computer technology as the culprit for decreasing attention spans, the same advancements provide increased opportunities for personal connection (Carr, 2011; Naaman et. al., 2011). Humans exhibit a preference for shorter text; however, their desire for connection through storytelling is stronger than ever before. The realization that publications aimed toward the English department were arguing for "less words" while publications aimed toward the Business department were demanding "more stories" produced an interesting conflict that I sought to explore.

Narrowing the Project Focus

I determined that the common theme between these two sets of data was narrative storyline, and therefore, I began to research storytelling from a multitude of perspectives. I dove into narratology, analyzing the origins of storytelling, the evolution of this process over time and its place in history, and the role of storytelling in the formation of personal connections. My research exposed interesting and helpful details, but the more I focused on this topic, the more information I found and the more difficult it became to concentrate on one train of thought. I formulated a proposal to focus solely on technological changes on the world of writing, but this

category was still too vast to fully explore in an honors project and too ambiguous to generate useful data in a single study. After my first proposal, I realized that the category of technological change and storytelling was too large to tackle. At this point, I considered dividing the projects and giving up on the interdisciplinary approach, but I knew creating a project to connect both fields would be a beneficial experience and would produce a valuable end result.

I looked through the binders of research that I had compiled to date, searching for the strongest pieces of information. It was difficult to throw away some of my hard work, but while many of my findings to this point were interesting; many of them were also irrelevant and distracting. I chose to focus on the application of narrative technique to the plotline of television advertisements. Once I removed information that did not speak directly to this central theme, I was left with a clear summary of studies on narrative technique in advertising. I stitched together the remaining valuable studies to progress the point that plot, genre, setting, and character elements can be manipulated in a business setting to increase persuasion among target demographics. I chose to narrow my attention once more to the concept of characterization and the plot structure present in Joseph Campbell's monomyth, and this analysis provided the necessary details to create a scientific study. The background knowledge I developed in the English department regarding basic narrative structure, persuasion, and clear communication helped to steer me in the right direction throughout my development of the literature review, survey questions, and ad narratives. I look forward to collecting survey data, composing a discussion, and shedding some light on plot and character preference in advertising.

My Overall Experience with HID

As my project took shape over the course of the year, I experienced many instances of personal growth. The process of constant revision and paring down was new to me, as I had never completed long-term research before, but it helped me realize the importance of a strong central argument. Tangents, while interesting, can distract the reader from the author's main point and cloud understanding. Along the same lines, through composing my literature review, I gained additional experience writing in a clear, direct manner and finding the best way to communicate complex information. The support of my research panel and my gains in both of these areas helped me ultimately complete the best version of this project.

On a broader scale, completing an interdisciplinary honors project provided me the opportunity to illustrate how all of the facets of my liberal arts education work together to support my understanding of the world. The liberal arts experience is about attaining a well-rounded, holistic education. Throughout my research, not only did I draw relationships between the English and business departments, but I realized that there were valuable connections to be made across other disciplines as well. Psychology, anthropology, and even mythology each contributed vital insights to my final literature review, methodology, and survey.

As mentioned, my initial interest in obtaining honors in the discipline was sparked by the desire to intimately understand both of my fields and respond to some of my own unanswered questions throughout the years. I only accomplished half of this goal; the process has certainly helped me explore the interplay between the professional writing and business disciplines, but in the end, I have only generated more unanswered questions! While it may have required several rounds of revision and led to more questions than it has answers, this project has affirmed that I selected the right two majors, giving me a sense of purpose and belonging as an undergraduate student.

My mentors here at the college have supported me through my own journey to awakening, and my worldview has certainly been transformed.